

## Engler announces fourth Project Zero expansion

**19 new counties added to welfare-to-work program in June**

**Howard: remaining counties coming later in 2000**

Governor John Engler said April 19 the fourth expansion of Project Zero — Michigan's landmark welfare reform program — will begin in June.

Established in 1996, Project Zero is carried out through county Family Independence Agency offices in collaboration with Work First and Michigan Works Agencies and community partners. State partners include the departments of Career Development, Transportation, Community Health and Michigan State Housing Development Authority.

"With 76 percent of all target cases represented in Project Zero and 44 sites hitting zero since September 1997 — including 12 from Wayne County and all Oakland County districts — we can say without hesitation it has performed at a level no one anticipated," said Engler. "Project Zero counties and districts have exceeded every conceivable goal."

When new sites begin in June, Project Zero activities will take place in 68 counties including the entire Upper Peninsula and northern Lower Peninsula.

The official start date for this Project Zero expansion is June 1. New counties will kick off Project Zero with local events in June. Engler said the new sites are:

■ Houghton, Keweenaw, Marquette, Baraga, Iron, Dickinson, Luce, Chippewa, and Mackinac counties in the Upper Peninsula.

■ Otsego, Cheboygan, Crawford, Roscommon, Ogemaw, Alcona and

Iosco counties in the northern Lower Peninsula.

■ Livingston, Monroe and Allegan counties in the southern Lower Peninsula.

The project goal is to reduce target Family Independence Program cases without income to zero. Target cases are those open 60 days or longer and expected to work. When a county reaches the point that all target cases have earned income, it is said to reach "zero."

"Project Zero sites have been effective in reducing target cases and helping public assistance families join the workforce," said FIA director Douglas E. Howard.

Using locally developed programs and contracts with local providers, Project Zero counties have consistently moved target case families off FIP and into work more rapidly than nonparticipating counties. The project began in six pilot sites in 1996. In the second year, Project Zero expanded to 12 sites in nine counties. The project was expanded to 35 sites in October 1998, then to 49 counties and 70 sites in October 1999.

"We now see Project Zero as a way of doing business," said Howard. "By the end of calendar year 2000, all counties will participate in Project Zero."

### FIA Icon for June 2000

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# Intercepted letters

## FIA should not shoulder all blame

By Elizabeth Christensen

Roscommon

■ This originally appeared as a letter to the editor in the Roscommon County Herald-News, a weekly newspaper. The author responded to statements from a story involving the local FIA office and a family case. The letter is reprinted with permission of the Herald-News and the author, an FIA retiree.

I am writing because of your cover story in your March 26 issue entitled "Parishioners protest FIA removal action." I do not object to any citizen having the right to picket for any action where they feel an injustice has been done. I do not know the parents involved here, nor had I ever heard of this case prior to reading about it in the paper. It certainly is regrettable that a child has died, whether in foster care or with a parent. Would this child have died if in the parent's home of croup and pneumonia? Possible?

The problem I see here is – FIA and Children's Protective Agency personnel are damned if they do and damned if they don't. There is a public outcry when a child dies or is injured in the care of a parent due to physical or mental abuse, violence or negligence. What is heard is, "Where was Children's Protective Services that they do not do something before it was too late?"

I retired from FIA three years ago. I took early retirement due to stress and high caseloads on the job. I understand that since I left there have been caseworkers out on medical leave for this same purpose. There comes a time, believe me, when your health can't take it any longer. My doctor advised me to retire if possible. He stated that FIA workers have one of the most stressful jobs of patients he treats.

When I first started work for DSS over 23 years ago I transcribed Children's Protective Services case notes for the case file, and the abuse and neglect some children had to endure was horrible. I had nightmares over what I had to type up. Fortunately I only did that work for a short time before being a caseworker. I know I would not have lasted long transcribing CPS case notes.

Up until I started work in 1977 for DSS, I was like most people, with my head in the sand—not knowing this type of abuse existed. I was appalled. The burnout rate for CPS workers is high. I can't imagine actually seeing those children and having to deal with it on a daily basis.

I am writing not because of the controversy involving this poor child but because of this statement made (by P. A. C. state director Dan Wilson) in the paper: "FIA has gone overboard in an attempt to bolster its caseloads and bring in federal bonus money for foster case placement."

That made me angry. Believe me, nothing is further from the truth. Workers don't need higher caseloads and they are in a "no win" situation just trying to do the best they can. They love children and do not use them as pawns to bolster their own good. They don't have to; they have more than they can handle as it is.

My condolences to the parents of this child but please don't bash hardworking caseworkers with statements of this sort. Remember there are always two sides to every story.

## Please do!

FIA Icon represents the universe of activity in the FIA but only with your help. Please send your stories through an appropriate member of the editorial board or to the editor, who prefers e-mail. Stories should be preapproved by local authorities and are subject to review, editing and (very, very, very, very rarely) rejection. Thanks!



## FIA Icon

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## ***From the Director***

*By Douglas E. Howard*

Director, Family Independence Agency

### **Children's Memorial Day and the FIA**

In late April I presented an Executive Proclamation declaring April 28 Children's Memorial Day during ceremonies at the state Capitol. The event spotlighted our partnership with public and private agencies to improve children's health and safety and prevent child deaths in Michigan.

Michigan Child Death Review Teams were established in 1995 to review why 2,000 children die each year, including deaths from homicide, parent or caregiver abuse and suicide. Those teams have concluded that 44 percent of those deaths were preventable. By celebrating Children's Memorial Day, Michigan joins 32 other states that promote actions to stop preventable child deaths. The national effort is spearheaded by the Child Welfare League of America.

In our agency child abuse is all too often a part of our business. Our partnership with the Children's Trust Fund, other state and private agencies is to support efforts to end child abuse, for no child can grow up without jeopardy in such a situation.

At the Family Independence Agency we strongly believe every child deserves a safe stable home, especially children who have been removed from their families by the courts because they were abused or neglected. When that happens, our agency becomes responsible for placing them in permanent adoptions.

These are usually special needs children, often minorities who have secondary physical or mental health impairments. On average, they are older than infants who are placed more easily by private and international agencies.

During fiscal year 1999, in partnership with private contract agencies, we placed a record 2,417 state wards in permanent new homes. As a result of our success, we were awarded more than \$2 million in federal adoption incentive funds to help us continue this encouraging upward trend.

The bonus funds are already at work promoting adoptions in many Michigan communities. In January, Gov. John Engler announced FIA grant awards totaling \$540,619 to 22 adoption agencies statewide. The grants were awarded in a competitive process based on input from parents who adopted state wards and reflected the services they needed.

We surveyed 649 adoptive families from throughout the state who told us what they needed. They often cited a need for support groups, respite services and educational services for their children. They also made it clear they appreciated the services they received from us. More than 90 percent said they were satisfied with the services they received from the Adoption Subsidy Office.

This input from adoptive families greatly helped us decide what kinds of services to fund with our federal incentive payment, and where those services should be provided. This is another example of government collaborating with our customers to determine and meet their specific local needs.

A permanent loving home is something each Michigan child deserves.

# April was a “Misty month” in Huron County

## Local woman awarded 77<sup>th</sup> Achiever of the Month Award

By Ronald Wing, Program Manager  
Huron County Family Independence Agency  
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**BAD AXE** – The weather was warm and sunny on April 14 in this city in Michigan’s thumb. Nonetheless, April was declared a “Misty month” by all those in attendance at the Achiever of the Month award ceremony held at the Huron County Family Independence Agency. A “Misty Vallance Month”, that is.

That’s because Misty Vallance, the single mother of two small children, was presented the 77<sup>th</sup> Achiever of the Month award. Misty Vallance was selected to receive the April 2000 award because of her determined efforts to improve life for her family and because of her extraordinary efforts to become independent of the welfare system.

### Many official thanks

At the event, Huron County FIA director Tom Dillon welcomed guests and congratulated Misty for her success. During the ceremony Dillon presented Misty with a personal gift and gift certificates for her children that had been provided by the Huron County FIA Board.

Douglas E. Howard, director of the Michigan FIA, presented Misty with the Achiever of the Month award certificate and a gift certificate. Howard praised Misty for her outstanding progress toward self-sufficiency.

Howard said one of the great benefits of the program has been to show that welfare reform has made a positive difference in the lives of public assistance recipients.

“Michigan has been a leader in welfare reform and has received national recognition for our efforts related to the achiever of the month



**Misty Vallance**

award program,” he said. Howard said he felt this was justified because these programs “let us know there are faces attached to the numbers we’re always talking about.”

### Jobs the object

Howard congratulated local FIA office staff for their efforts in helping customers achieve self-sufficiency. He expressed his thanks to all FIA agency partners such as the Michigan Works Agency and the Huron Area Technical Center for their efforts in helping our customers become successful and expressed special recognition to employers.

Howard thanked employers for giving FIA customers the opportunity to show that they are “just like everyone else.” Howard, an Iowa native, mentioned the “Midwest work ethic” and indicated this might be one reason why our customers are such hardworking employees. “Without employers, we would not be where we are today,” Howard said.

He recognized Misty’s family members who attended the ceremony and related how important families

are to everyone’s success in life. “There is a consistent message related to welfare reform: this is about families,” he said.

### The Misty in “Misty month”

Misty Vallance turned to the Huron County FIA for assistance in April 1999. At that time her finances were drained and she needed help providing for her two sons, three-year-old Joshua Tough and one-year-old Justin Tough. She received Family Independence Program benefits, Medicaid, child care and food stamps. Misty was thankful but determined not to let public assistance become a way of life for her family.

Despite the challenges of her situation, Misty was positive and self-motivated. During her meetings with her family independence specialist she focused on what she needed to do and displayed a keen interest in learning what programs were available to aid in meeting her goals.

### Turn over a new leaf

In April 1999 Misty was referred to Work First, where she received funds to purchase clothes for job interviews. In less than two weeks Misty found a part-time job as a deli clerk at Caseville IGA. When she began working, Work First supplied her with funds to buy a car and later, to obtain repairs in order to provide her with reliable transportation. Misty’s hard work quickly paid off. On June 5, 1999 her cash assistance case closed due to earnings.

While Misty was happy to have employment she recognized that, if she continued in the grocery store position, she would not be

earning enough to meet her family needs. She was determined to find a job that offered greater financial opportunities. Through a self-initiated job search in July 1999, Misty found employment as a sales clerk at Norman's, a local clothing store.

#### **Greater rewards from work**

Now Misty was working additional hours with more income. Despite these gains she was not satisfied. Instead she was even more determined to find a better job opportunity. Later that month, when she heard about openings at Huron Casting, Inc., an area manufacturing company, she applied for a job and was hired as a production worker. She still works there today.

Misty's efforts to provide a



**Don Maurer and Misty Vallance**

better life for her family continue. She is studying cosmetology at the Huron Area Technical Center with plans to someday open her own salon.

At the ceremony, Misty's FIA family independence specialist, Don Maurer, congratulated Misty for her accomplishments. "Misty is one of the most motivated individuals I have ever had the pleasure to work with and I have been doing this job for over 22 years," he said.

Jo Dohning, Misty's Michigan Works customer services manager, said she had been working with Misty for over a year and was very

impressed with her "determination and positive attitude." Misty's assistant foreman, Ed Osantoski, echoed these sentiments: "Misty does work that even some men can't do," he said. "I always tell the men that if a young lady like Misty can do the work then why can't you?"

#### **More plaudits**

Even Misty's child care provider had something great to say about her. "I've known Misty for about a year now," said Misty's licensed day care provider, Kay Hebert. "When she called me to see if I had an opening she came right over after I told her I did. She is a very good mother to her children and they are always well provided for."

Kay went on to express her appreciation for the "team effort" which has been put forth by workers from FIA, Michigan Works, and the Huron Area Technical Center. She said, "It's nice to see the successful side of the work being done by the Family Independence Agency."

Still more people came forward with great things to say about Misty. Her cosmetology instructor from Huron Area Technical Center, Mary Motz, gave high praise for her hard work and good example. "Misty arrives at school before I do in the morning and is always hard at work on her studies," she said.

"She gets dressed for her factory job at the end of class and it is quite a transformation from her school dress to her work clothes and those funny looking work boots she puts on." Mary went on to say that the young women attending the cosmetology school looked up to Misty and that "Misty's hard work and success serve as a role model to these young girls." Mary also expressed her appreciation for the team effort and support that all the involved

agencies have provided in relation to this one young women's life.

During the event in Bad Axe, Misty also received written congratulations from a pair of elected officials that represent her—state Sen. Joel Gougeon of Bangor and U. S. Rep. Jim Barcia of Bay City.

#### **Misty won't repeat the past**

During Misty's remarks she thanked Don Maurer for his support and expressed gratitude to all the others present that had supported her efforts and played a part in her accomplishments. Misty expressed special thanks to her grandparents, Willard and Emma Vallance, who had been a positive example to Misty and had given her support and nurturing throughout her childhood.

In a moment of personal revelation, Misty said her mother had been on public assistance for a long period of time when she was a child. She vowed she would never adopt that lifestyle. "I wanted to prove to my children that I could make it on my own," Misty said.

"There were times when I thought; can I really do this? I just kept on going and telling myself that I needed to be a positive example to my kids if I expected them to be successful in their lives."

Misty closed saying it was an honor to receive the achiever award. At the conclusion of her remarks she received a standing ovation from everyone present. After the ceremony refreshments were served, and those present congratulated Misty and her family on her accomplishments.

Huron County FIA staff offer their sincere congratulations to Misty Vallance, who serves as an example to all of us. Her life demonstrates how hard work and determination can lead to success and self-sufficiency.



# FIA summer project contractors selected

## 18 organizations chosen in 12 counties

The Family Independence Agency selected 19 contract agencies to help implement the “Family Independence Summer Project,” a special short-term project that will begin in mid-June and continue through August. Gov. John Engler made the announcement May 2.

The summer project will serve about 6,000 Family Independence Program participants and other families who have been unable to enter the workforce due to barriers.

“This is the next step in getting people off the welfare rolls and onto the payrolls,” said Engler.

“Our goal is to use all possible community services to help families overcome the unique personal roadblocks that keep them from working, irrespective of cause.

“If there is a parenting, money management or drug use issue in the household, the summer project will help them resolve it and allow them to enter the work force.”

The project will serve selected nonworking FIP families who have received benefits at least 60 days, have at least one child one year of age or older, and have no earned income.

“The summer project will employ one of the broadest community partnerships assembled in state government,” said FIA director Douglas E. Howard.

“It will involve schools, nonprofits and faith-based organizations in many communities.

Contractors will procure and administer local services provided to families in their counties, acting as “umbrella” agencies that select local nonprofits, individuals and companies to deliver services. Selected contractors include:

**Berrien County:** Gateway, 201 Sylvester, Berrien Springs.

**Calhoun County:** the local Family Independence Agency office will serve as the coordinating agency.

**Genesee County (4):** Baker College, 1050 W. Bristol Road; Flint Community Schools, 923 E. Kearsley Street; Mott Community College, 1401 E. Court Street; and Mass Transportation Authority, 1401 S. Dort Highway, all in Flint.

**Ingham County (2):** Capitol Area Community Services, Inc., 101 E. Willow, Lansing; Highfields, Inc. in Onondaga.

**Jackson County:** Jackson Public Schools, 1409 W. Monroe St., Jackson.

**Kalamazoo County:** Kalamazoo Public Schools, 1220 Howard St., Kalamazoo.

**Kent County:** Goodwill Industries, 3035 Prairie S. W., Grandville.

**Macomb County:** Macomb-St. Clair Workforce Development Board, 21885 Dunham Suite 11, Clinton Township.

**Muskegon County:** Muskegon Area Intermediate School District, 630 Harvey St., Muskegon.

**Oakland County:** Resource Network, 196 Oakland Ave. Suite 103, Pontiac.

**Saginaw County:** Opportunities Industrialization Center of Metropoli-

tan Saginaw, 1000 Tuscola St., Saginaw.

**Washtenaw County:** contractor selection was incomplete at time of this information release.

**Wayne County (3)**  
Career Works, 1200 E. McNichols, Highland Park; Employment & Training Design, Inc., 3639 Metro Place Mall, Wayne; Michigan Neighborhood Partnership, 104 Lothrop, Detroit.

The project will use a comprehensive, integrated approach. Adults will be assessed to determine barriers to attaining self-sufficiency and independence and will get help in areas that could include literacy, family health, home or money management, nutrition and parenting skills.

Adult participants will be required to participate in 30 hours of programming per week and single parent families will be required to spend 10 of those hours in programs with their children. In addition to hours spent together with parents, children who participate will benefit from day camp experiences, summer youth employment and preschool learning programs.

On-site child care and tutoring will be available so children have safe, productive and educational summer opportunities. Families will receive transportation help necessary to participate.

Two sites will serve adults with disabilities in voluntary projects. In Kent and Berrien counties, FIA offices will serve persons with

*continues on page 7*

# GM commits \$10,000 to youth leadership forum

LANSING—The world's biggest corporation made a substantial commitment to ensure tomorrow's leaders get important training today.

Lorna Utley, director of public policy and community relations at General Motors, said GM has contributed \$10,000 to the Sondra Berlin Michigan Youth Leadership Forum, a leadership program that will be held this summer for selected Michigan high school students with disabilities.

"General Motors is pleased to be able to continue to provide commitment to programs which promote the abilities of people with disabilities, including the Michigan Youth Leadership Forum," said Utley.

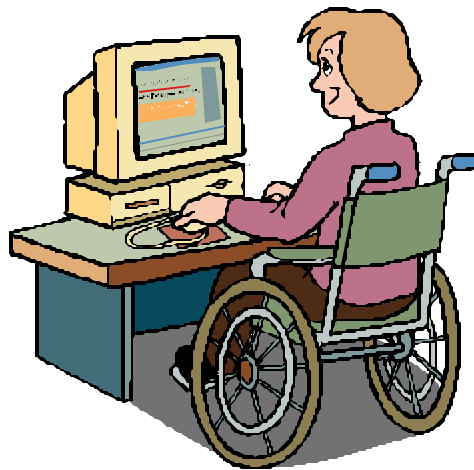
The youth leadership forum, to be held July 16-20 at Michigan State University, is a unique leadership program for high school juniors and seniors with disabilities. In the summer training forum, successful adults with disabilities will serve as mentors. They will help youth with disabilities realize their ability, right, and obligation to pursue meaningful employment and to contribute to society.

The Michigan Youth Leadership Forum is a cooperative project coordinated by the Michigan Commission on Disability Concerns with assistance from representatives from 25 other public and private agencies.

Michigan Commission on Disability Concerns is a state agency administered through the Family Independence Agency. It acts as a resource and advocacy agency for Michigan citizens with disabilities. It has staff in Lansing and a 21-member commission whose members are appointed by the governor.

"The Sondra Berlin Training

Forum is an important effort to improve the lives of Michigan citizens with disabilities by training tomorrow's leaders," said FIA director Douglas E. Howard April 13. "GM has long supported similar



programs that help Michigan citizens with disabilities."

Thirty students have been selected to attend the training forum in July. They were selected through a competitive application process and will attend at no cost to their families.

"We are very pleased that, through its contribution, General Motors demonstrates they believe young people with disabilities have a lot to offer to their communities, both

now and in the future," said Lydia Graber, chairperson of the Michigan Commission on Disability Concerns.

The federal President's Committee on Employment of People with Disabilities, state and local agencies and other private businesses have made financial contributions to the July forum. The President's Committee and state Commission on Disability Concerns share a formal working relationship promoting disability-related programs.

"As a charter member of our commission's Business Leaders Network, General Motors has provided ongoing support for Michigan citizens with disabilities," said Gerry Mutty, Executive Director of the MCDC. "This generous donation to the Michigan Youth Leadership Forum is another indication of this support."

For more information about the Sondra Berlin Michigan Youth Leadership Forum, contact Gerry Mutty at Michigan Commission on Disability Concerns by phone: (517) 334-8000 voice/TTY; email [mcdc@state.mi.us](mailto:mcdc@state.mi.us); Internet [www.mfia.state.mi.us/mcdc/mcdc.htm](http://www.mfia.state.mi.us/mcdc/mcdc.htm)

## Summer contractors selected

*continues from page 6*

disabilities — mainly Supplemental Security Income recipients — who wish to use community services and join the work force.

Near the completion of the project, the FIA will work with local Michigan Works Agency partners to provide intensive job search, job placement and job fairs to help develop employment opportunities for families.

The Family Independence Summer Project will serve families from the 13 counties and these Wayne County Family Independence Agency districts: Greenfield-Joy, Inkster, Schoolcraft-Stansbury, Glendale-Trumbull, Hamtramck, Highland Park, Medbury-Concord and McNichols-Goddard.

# State association announces 2000 award winners

## Foster parent, social worker, adoptive family and special service awards given FIA employee Ann Shea of Saginaw County among four statewide exemplars

Information: Alma Schmidt

Michigan Foster and Adoptive Parent Association, Holt

Phone: (800) 632-4180

Internet: [www.mfapa.org](http://www.mfapa.org)

GRAND RAPIDS, Mich.—The Michigan Foster and Adoptive Parent Association announced two families and two FIA employees were its 2000 award winners at a special ceremony in this western Michigan city. The association is a partner with the Family Independence Agency in recruiting, training and retaining qualified foster and adoptive parents.

Four winners received their awards during formal presentations at association's annual conference in Grand Rapids April 8. The association's goal is to promote and enhance communication, cooperation and coordination of efforts of those interested in, and involved with, the child welfare system in Michigan.

The Michigan Adoptive and Foster Parent Association was founded 20 years ago and with more than 2,000 members is the largest grassroots organization serving parents whose interest is providing out-of-home care for children. Its major focus is recruiting, retaining and educating foster and adoptive families. Its 2000 award winners are:

### Foster Family of the Year

#### Frank & Audry Kobasic of Escanaba

Taking care of children can be quite a handful, but think of the work involved in caring for 233 children. That's how many children one Delta County couple has brought into their home since they first received their foster parent license more than 15 years ago. For their dedication and commitment to helping children, Frank and Audry Kobasic



**Audry Kobasic**  
(Frank unavailable)



**Ann Shea**

They've built a reputation throughout the county for providing excellent care to their foster children. Currently, the Kobasics are licensed to care for a maximum of four children, either boys or girls from ages six to 18 years of age. Specifically, they've demonstrated extraordinary success with adolescent females.

Frank and Audry have been active members of the Delta County Foster Parents Association for several years. In fact, Audry has served as the association's secretary, been active in fundraising efforts and has contributed to writing the association newsletter. The Kobasics have not only been there for their foster children but also for other foster

parents. As foster parent mentors the couple has often received phone calls from other foster parents asking for their parenting advice.

Case-workers with the Delta County Family Independence Agency say the Kobasics have become a valuable resource. According to staff at the Delta County Probate Court, the Kobasics are highly respected.

parents. As foster parent mentors the couple has often received phone calls from other foster parents asking for their parenting advice.

Frank and Audry Kobasic are truly outstanding foster parents and for that the Michigan Foster and Adoptive Parent Association congratulates them on this award.

### Social Worker of the Year

#### Ann Shea of Saginaw

The Saginaw County Family Independence Agency is the home of the Social Worker of the Year. Over a period of 16 years Ann Shea has touched the lives of countless children and parents in Saginaw County.

Ann has always placed a top priority on the families she serves. She has a reputation of not taking more than three to four days of vacation at a time, because she believes her cases should never be in limbo any longer. Her support for birth parents, relatives and foster parents is unsurpassed. Her professionalism, whether in a courtroom or family's home, is impeccable.

Ann graduated from Aquinas College in 1971 with a bachelor's degree in sociology. She began her career as a social worker in Saginaw County's Department of Social Services where she worked for 10 years in the children's foster care unit. When she began her own family, she dedicated her time to raising her children until they were all in school full-time. In 1994 she returned to social work in the foster care unit of the Saginaw County FIA.



Testimonies of her tireless efforts are easy to find. The families she has helped all speak highly of her ability to encourage, support and listen to all the family members involved with each case.

### **Adoptive Family of the Year Paul & Sherry Petroelje of Byron Center**

A Byron Center couple was named the adoptive Family of the Year. Paul and Sherry Petroelje have never been ones to shy away from a challenge when it comes to providing consistent and loving parenting to children.

Since 1985 the Petroeljes have been foster parents with Bethany Christian Services in Grand Rapids. They have opened their home to 26 different foster children, four of which they've adopted into their own family. The depth of their involvement with their adoptive children has gone far beyond the scope of traditional parenting.

The Petroeljes first foster child was a male experiencing Attention Deficit Disorder diagnosed as bipolar, having Oppositional Defiant Disorder, learning disabilities and a low IQ. He had also been sexually abused. They later adopted the child and when his biological mother became terminally ill they took him to visit her in the hospital and later took him to the funeral.

Another child, an 11-year-old female, first came to their home as a foster child and eventually they adopted her. She was considered very street smart, developmentally delayed and not very motivated for her academic studies. Her other



**Paul and Sherry Petroelje**

destructive behaviors included lying, stealing and simply being mean to other children.

They also took on a 12-year-old girl as a foster child and later adopted her at age 13. She had signs of immaturity and had been physically abused by her mother's boyfriend. She is now able to function within normal standards and is in a regular education program.

A nine-day-old infant was placed in the Petroelje home and they later adopted him. The boy's mother was a substance abuser, which drastically affected his ability to develop emotionally and intellectually. He is speech, language and emotionally impaired. Due to the lack of speech and language skills, whenever he doesn't get his way he articulates his feelings by screaming and having temper tantrums.

The Petroeljes have shown great patience, care and love for both their foster and adoptive children. For that the Michigan Foster and Adoptive Parent Association congratulates them on this award.

### **Special Service Award Winner The Honorable Judge Donna Morris of Midland County**

For her tireless support protecting and nurturing families, Judge Donna Morris was named the Special Service Award Winner.

On Jan. 6 Judge Morris announced that she would not seek re-election as probate judge in Midland County. This was disheartening news for the many foster and adoptive parents who have worked closely with her. They have appreciated her support and caring administration over the legal system. The foster parents in her area were aware of her declining physical health and prayed that her condition would not interfere with her work (a somewhat selfish attitude, to which they readily admit).

Morris has served as probate judge for more than 20 years and is known for her fair and sensitive attitude toward children and families. Her decisions concerning the fate of children in the social service system have garnered praise and criticism. She has been called the terminator and true friend of children. In conversation, she has confided that this area of involvement is the source of both her greatest joy and deepest pain. Judge Morris does not take her position lightly nor does she allow politics or personal agendas to interfere with her wise judgment.

For all of these reasons, the Michigan Foster and Adoptive Parent Association has named Judge Donna Morris the 2000 MFAPA Special Service Award winner.

■ *Note:* A photo of Judge Morris was not available.

# Oscoda and Clinton reach “zero”

## Two rural counties reach mark without countywide transportation service

The Oscoda and Clinton County Project Zero programs became the 43<sup>rd</sup> and 44<sup>th</sup> sites to reach zero, the point in time where all target Family Independence Program cases are working and earning income.

“Congratulations to Oscoda County FIA director Jim Beach and Clinton-Shiawassee director Paula Clark, their staff members and community partners,” said FIA director Douglas E. Howard. “While their case numbers may appear small, this should not diminish the stature of their accomplishments.”

Oscoda reached zero March 31 and Clinton attained “zero” April 27. Both counties joined Project Zero in October 1999 when it was expanded from 35 to 70 areas of the state. Oscoda is part of a dual-county operation with Montmorency County and Clinton is part of a dual county arrangement with Shiawassee County.

“Oscoda County is a rural area with no mass transit system where the cyclical economy is built on tourism,” said Howard. “They achieved zero without benefit of the summer tourism season or a lot of large employers more populated counties take for granted.”

When it joined Project Zero in October 1999, Oscoda County had 23 target cases and 8 without earnings. That group was reduced to 3 at the end of February and to zero on March 31.

“Oscoda County Family Independence Agency staff deserve congratulations for this milestone,” said Montmorency-Oscoda FIA director Jim Beach.

“Together with Northeast Michigan Consortium, our Michigan

Works Agency partner, and 4C (Community Coordinated Child Care), we built a program where all our customers could succeed.”

Beach said a 4C staff person works onsite in the county FIA office and helps Project Zero customers make child care arrangements. The dual county office is working with



**Jim Beach**

our final target cases to get them into the work force,” said Rich Calkins, Project Zero coordinator for Montmorency-Oscoda FIA. “I went on home calls with our FIS worker on our two final cases. We were able to help both get self-employment locally. One was able to turn that into a permanent 40-hour a week job.”

Calkins cited Glen’s Market, Garland Inc. and Siebe Automotive and smaller local employers who assisted their efforts. “Local employers played a vital role in keeping our clients working,” he said.

Clinton County joined Project Zero in October 1999 when it was expanded from 35 to 70 areas of the state. Clinton is a dual-county Family Independence Agency joined with Shiawassee County, although each county has an individual service office.

On Oct. 1, 1999 Clinton County had 46 target cases and 20 without earnings. The latter group was reduced to 7 at the end of March and to zero on April 27.

“While close geographically to Lansing and the seat of state government, Clinton County is a rural area without a comprehensive public transportation system,” said Howard. “The county reached zero without benefit from an expanded base of child care providers and few large local employers.”



**Paula Clark**

Clinton County has about 63,000 residents and is mainly an agricultural region. Neither of its two largest cities, St. Johns and DeWitt, have 10,000 residents. While county target customers tend to be isolated and rural, Clinton County has traditionally had a low unemployment rate and has been a place where relatively few relied on financial assistance.

“We are very excited and proud to have accomplished this through staff’s hard work,” said Clinton-Shiawassee FIA director Paula Clark.

Clark said the county is pursuing transportation service for customers and hopes to have a child day care coordinator from Michigan Community Coordinated Child Care onsite soon.

“Good old-fashioned case management, collaboration and communication with our project partners have been keys to our success,” said Clark. “This has been a community-wide project and everyone has supported us from the very beginning.”

Clinton County Project Zero

*continues on page 11*

# Engler creates e-Michigan Office

## Former FIA advisor Stephanie Comai appointed director of new office

LANSING—Gov. John Engler signed Executive Order 2000-6 April 6 establishing the **e-Michigan Office** within the Office of the Governor. The office will coordinate the development of electronic government service, reengineer current practices and design better ways of conducting the business of government.

Engler appointed Stephanie Comai, formerly director of the governor's Division of State Government Affairs, to run the new e-Michigan office.

"e-Michigan's goals are to provide more convenient services to our citizens 24 hours a day, seven days a week," said Engler.

"Not only will this new office provide services faster using the Internet and web-based technologies, it will eliminate the frustration of navigating through multiple government agencies to conduct business and will reduce the cost of services through the streamlining of current operations. Ultimately, citizens will have an easy-to-understand web connection to government services and information."

Executive Order 2000-6 establishes the e-Michigan Office within the Office of the Governor as a temporary agency. It will exist for no more than two years commencing May 1, 2000.

The executive order also establishes the e-Michigan Advisory Council, consisting of five members and will be chaired by the governor or his designee. The Advisory Council will advise the e-Michigan Office director on best practices for implementing e-commerce, future trends in business, government and education relating to the integration of e-commerce, and the best opportunities

for using e-commerce to offer the types of services desired.

Working with the Advisory Council, the office will develop a comprehensive strategy to install and use state-of-the-art technologies allowing the state to exchange information and conduct business-related transactions electronically with private and corporate citizens, other governments, business partners and its employees.

e-Michigan will work with state agencies to reengineer business processes to help them transact services through the Internet or other electronic means including business services, citizen services and outdoor

recreation services.

Comai, of Lansing, has served as director of the State Government Affairs division since January 1999. She previously served as that division's deputy director and as the social welfare policy advisor to the Engler and Gerald Miller, the former director of the Family Independence Agency.

Comai also worked in Washington at the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. She holds a bachelor's degree from the University of Michigan and a master's degree in public administration from George Washington University in Washington, D.C.

For a copy of the Executive Order, call the Governor's Communications division at (517) 335-6397 or visit the Governor's web site at: <http://info.migov.state.mi.us/gov/> and click on "Executive Orders."



**Stephanie Comai**

## Two counties reach zero *from page 10*

partners include the Capitol Area Michigan Works! and two local Work First contractors—Clinton Task Force on Employment and Peckham Vocational Services.

"FIA employees worked very closely with our Work First partners so every case would have success," Clark said. "Our customers deserve a lot of credit, too. They are definitely the ones who made it happen."

Clark said the Family Coordinating Council and Housing Resolution Task Force have also participated in Project Zero. "We received strong support from our county commissioners, our legislative community and social services board members," she said.

Started in 1996, Project Zero is a state and local project with a goal for all target cases to acquire work and earned income. Previous sites to reach zero one or more times include: Alger, Alpena, Antrim, Barry, Benzie, Berrien, Cass, Charlevoix, Eaton, Emmet, Gladwin, Grand Traverse, Hillsdale, Kalkaska, Kent, Lake, Lenawee, Leelanau, Manistee, Mason, Mecosta, Menominee, Midland, Montmorency, Newaygo, Oakland, Oceana, Ottawa, Presque Isle and Wexford-Missaukee counties; and the Wayne County Forest-Ellery, Fort Wayne, Fullerton-Jeffries, Greydale, Inkster, Lincoln Park, Magnolia, Redford, Romulus, Taylor, Tireman and Warren-Conner districts.



# Jasonowicz: adult services necessary, important

**Program meets needs of aging adults and is consistent with FIA mission  
Office of Adult Services plan outlines pursuit of new, improved services**

YPSILANTI—FIA adult services help protect vulnerable adults and fulfill the FIA mission to improve the quality of life for vulnerable citizens in Michigan. That was the message of an address by a top FIA official at a statewide conference April 19.

“Adult services help protect vulnerable adults,” said FIA deputy director Mark Jasonowicz.

Jasonowicz gave the address during “Teaming for Excellence: Collaborative Relationships with Customers, Co-Workers and the Community”, a statewide conference organized by the FIA Office of Adult Services. Jasonowicz filled in for FIA director Douglas Howard, who appeared at the conference via videotape address.

Jasonowicz began the day with a question and answer session with conference attendees. After lunch he addressed the group to elaborate on the director’s videotape address.

“Your work helps advocate for independence and dignity for aging and disabled individuals, consumer choice, developing partnerships with and educating communities,” said Jasonowicz, “and ensuring equal access to the range of community and state resources available to disadvantaged families.

“Doug sees you (adult services workers) as important members of the FIA team,” he said, speaking for Howard. “Doug endorses your vision of developing effective community partnerships that will protect vulnerable adults and ensure independence, dignity and a high quality of life by advocating for equal access to resources and services for our least advantaged residents.

“He also agrees with your mission to listen to customers, inform and encourage consumer choices, broker resources through partnerships and monitor service delivery and quality.”

Jasonowicz said the average monthly caseload “indicates a real need for your services.” Average adult services caseload numbers for fiscal year 1999 include:

- 2,926 active Adult Protective Services cases at any time with 70 percent of the APS cases involving neglect.
- 41,583 independent living services cases per month. The FIA estimates that half of all home help services are delivered to Michigan residents 60 years of age or older.
- The Home Help Services independent living program delivers 25 million hours of personal care services annually at an average cost of \$6 per hour.
- 6,524 adult community placement (adult foster care) cases a month, with 96 percent of adult community placement residents reporting satisfaction with their homes and care.

“We also support development of your strategic business plan, which strives to even more closely align adult services policy and training with our agency’s mission,” he said.

Jasonowicz reviewed the



**Mark Jasonowicz**

## Movin' on up

FIA director **Douglas E. Howard** announced April 18 the permanent appointment of **Mike Scieszka** as chief information officer for the FIA. “Mike accepted the interim position in October 1999 and was successful in leading our agency through the final changes of the new millennium,” Howard said. “He has successfully restructured the way the (Information Technology Management Services Administration) relates to special projects and agency priorities.”

Former FIA policy advisor **Stephanie Comai** was appointed by Gov. John Engler April 6 to direct e-Michigan. The agency will exist for two years to organize electronic state service delivery and access online. For more information see the story on page 11.

Zone 3 acting manager **Janet Strobe** announced the appointment of **Donna O’Grady** as acting director at Gratiot County FIA, effective May 1 because of Judith Friday’s medical leave. “Donna is an AP specialist with Outstate Operations and is statewide manager for Project Zero,” Strobe said April 21.

Strobe also announced the appointments of **Don Rewa** and **Jan Baszler** as acting directors for Barry-Eaton County FIA. “They will be the acting directors due to Ron Decker’s retirement,” Strobe said. Rewa is program manager in Barry County and Baszler holds the same position in Eaton County. The pair will rotate as acting director, Rewa during may and Baszler in June.

*continues on page 13*

# Healthy Kids Dental pilot project begins

**Partnership with Delta Dental will serve 50,000 Medicaid beneficiaries in 22 counties**

Michigan entered into an agreement with Delta Dental Plan of Michigan to administer a new dental program for Medicaid beneficiaries under age 21 called "Healthy Kids Dental". Gov. Engler announced the new program April 18.

"This will make dental care available to younger citizens," said Engler. "This partnership is an important step toward eliminating disparities in access to oral health care. It will serve 50,000 children and young adults in need."

The Healthy Kids Dental pilot project will operate in 22 counties and will promote better access to dental care for Medicaid beneficiaries through Delta Dental's participating dentist networks. The plan covers x-rays, cleaning, fillings, root canals, extractions and dentures.

Beginning May 1, the program will serve 50,000 Medicaid beneficiaries under age 21 in Alger, Arenac, Barry, Cheboygan, Clinton, Dickinson, Eaton, Emmet, Gladwin, Hillsdale, Huron, Ionia, Iosco, Isabella, Lapeer, Lenawee, Livingston, Luce, Monroe, St. Clair, Sanilac and Tuscola counties.

The agreement calls for Delta Dental Plan of Michigan to administer Medicaid dental benefits in accordance with their standard procedures, claim form and payment mechanisms. Delta Dental is a nonprofit service corporation that administers group dental benefit programs for more than three million people in the state.

The partnership follows a recent announcement from the Department of Community Health of \$5.16 million in dental health funding for Medicaid beneficiaries to improve access and enable 90,000 to receive oral health services.

## Juvenile justice grants awarded to Saginaw County

**Will provide education, training for juveniles**

**Grants and in-kind funds total \$195,000 for project**

The Saginaw Communities That Care (SCTC) project has received a \$126,483 federal Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Act grant. The announcement was made April 7 by the Houghton Neighborhood Task Force, Saginaw County Community Services Collaborative Body and the First Ward Community Center.

The grant, in tandem with local in-kind contributions of \$69,653, will be administered by the First Ward Community Center and coordinated by the Houghton-Jones Neighborhood Task Force, Incorporated.

"This grant will enable Saginaw agencies to continue local problem solving," said FIA director Douglas Howard. "By breaking down problem behaviors, the project helps parents raise healthy children in a safe community." The grants are administered by the FIA.

The project includes two components. The first, Achieve a College Education, is a program designed to reduce negative behavior and instill youth with positive life skills, values and goals.

The second component, the SCTC Family Empowerment program, is designed to reduce inappropriate behavior in school, manage parental stress, reduce the movement of children from school to school during the school year and promote academic success and the establishment of career goals.

The project is a cooperative and collaborative effort involving Saginaw County, the Neighborhood Task Force, First Ward Community Services, the Saginaw Board of Education and other public and private entities. For local information, contact Hazel Wilson at (517) 752-6091.

## Adult services from page 12

Office of Adult Services business plan, which outlines intended programmatic goals. Major goals include finding new partners to fight elder financial exploitation, developing an Adult Training Institute and local Adult Protective Services teams.

"Using this business plan as an effective tool will increase your ability to meet the unique needs of Michigan's vulnerable adults," he said.

Jasonowicz closed by thanking the group for their hard work and reminding them that they value the service they provide to the agency and communities.

The Office of Adult Services oversees statewide services including protective services, independent living and home help services, and adult community placement services intended to reduce or eliminate the need for institutional care.



# Crime victim's service award goes to Schlaufman

**Otsego County FIA employee cited for important local work  
Her work with a child's assault case led to the award**

By Shelly R. Burgess  
Gaylord Herald Times

■ This story was originally printed in the April 12 issue of the Gaylord Times Herald. It is used here with permission.

GAYLORD – She is a confidante, a protector, and one might even call her a lifesaver. As a service worker with the Otsego County Family Independence Agency, Jody Schlaufman's job encompasses many things, and the prosecutor's office decided it was time to recognize the work she does.

Schlaufman is one of four Otsego County service providers who earned the distinction of being named a Crime Victim's Service Award winner.

"It is an honor to have your work valued by these other members of the community because we work together so closely," Schlaufman said.

"Jody is a wonderful asset to our agency," said Otsego County FIA director Cynthia Pushman.

Otsego County Prosecutor Kevin Hesselink explained the purpose of the award is not only to publicize National Crime Victim's Awareness Week – April 9-15 – but also to let people know there are victims in Otsego County and there are people willing to help them. Schlaufman, he said, fits the bill.

"She went above and beyond the call of duty," he said. "That is exactly what this award is for –



**Left to right: Cathy Baragrey, Otsego County victim's advocate; Jody Schlaufman, Otsego County CPS worker; Jan Bailey, Otsego County FIA supervisor; Kevin Hesselink, Otsego County Prosecutor.**

someone who went out of their way to keep someone in our community safe."

It was Schlaufman's work with a specific case involving criminal sexual conduct against children and adults that led to the honor, according to Hesselink.

"She was chosen because...she does a great job helping to keep kids safe," Hesselink stated. "She not only assisted the kids (in the case), she went out of her way to become a confidante to the mother..."

In her line of work, Schlaufman deals with children's protective services, foster care and delinquency. Working with other agencies in the county, including the prosecutor's office, law enforcement, medical professionals, and community mental health, she strives to make the situation safe at home, provide treatment when necessary and help

resolve problems so families can stay together.

It was the trust and comfort of Schlaufman's relationship with the woman in the CSC case that led to justice for the family, and the offender received a sentence of 20 to 80 years for his crimes. "She went out of her way, fostering a relationship, protecting the mother as well as the children," Hesselink said. When the mother

wanted to talk, she listened."

To Schlaufman, it is part of her job – and that is why she enjoys it. "I consider this doing my job, and I like to do my job well," Schlaufman said. "Everyone is treated with respect and dignity. I think that allows families to work with our agency better. These are people. These are their lives."

She continued, adding the number one factor that keeps her going is: "It matters. These are people. If you are able to effectively provide intervention services to the families to keep them together so the children don't have to be removed from the (home) – that's the goal."

Otsego County Victim Advocate Cathy Baragrey said Schlaufman's commitment has not been overlooked. "Jody is very, very dedicated to serving others and providing them with the best services

*continues on page 15*

# Project Zero sites get enhanced transit funds

**Department of Transportation dedicates \$1.5 million for welfare to work transportation  
Fifteen Project Zero communities will benefit from improved services**

The Michigan Department of Transportation will distribute \$1.5 million for services to help welfare recipients and other low-income workers get to and from work, training, and child care sites. The services are part of Project Zero.

A partnership of the [Departments of Transportation, Career Development and FIA](#) will provide state funds for all capital and operating costs. [MDOT](#) will provide 100 percent of the capital costs and up to 50 percent of the operating costs; [FIA](#) and [MDCD](#) will each provide 25 percent of the operating costs for the following 15 projects:

- Altran Transit Authority (Munising) will receive \$7,500 for improved public transportation services on Saturdays.
- Arch Workshop, Inc. (Sturgis) will receive \$120,485 for improved countywide public transportation services and purchase of two vans.
- Bay Area Transportation Authority (Traverse City) will receive \$60,000 for improved public transportation services through a service broker.
- Branch Area Transit Authority (Coldwater) will receive \$60,000 for improved public transportation service during non-traditional hours.
- Cadillac/Wexford Transit Authority (Cadillac) will receive \$250,000 for improved countywide public transportation services in Missaukee and Wexford counties.
- [Capital Area Transportation Authority](#) (Lansing) will receive \$64,000 for improved public transportation services using two Michivans.
- Gladwin County Board of Commissioners will receive \$189,748 for improved countywide public transportation services, a vehicle with chains

and communications equipment.

- Gogebic County Transit (Ironwood) will receive \$143,712 for improved countywide public transportation services and a small lift-equipped bus.

■ City of Kalamazoo will receive \$100,000 for improved public transportation services and the services of a service broker.

- Lenawee County Board of Commissioners (Adrian) will receive \$116,000 for improved countywide public transportation services, car seats and communications equipment.

■ Ontonagon County Public Transit (Ontonagon) will receive \$102,852 for improved countywide public transportation services, a small lift-equipped

bus and communications equipment.

- Oscoda County Council on Aging (Comins) will receive \$60,000 for improved countywide public transportation services and one van.

■ Schoolcraft County Public Transit (Manistique) will receive \$10,000 for improved countywide public transportation services.

- Shiawassee Area Transportation Agency (Corunna) will receive \$21,250 for improved countywide public transportation services, one van and one small bus.

■ Thunder Bay Transportation Corporation (Alpena) will receive \$60,000 for improved countywide public transportation services in Montmorency County and one van.

## Crime victim's service award *from page 14*

she has available to them," Baragrey said. "She's a loving, caring, dedicated person and very committed to her job."

When Hesselink and Baragrey showed up for the April 11 FIA meeting it was not out of the ordinary since the agencies work together often. It wasn't until Hesselink began to talk about the Crime Victim's Service Award and the specific case it related to this year that Schlaufman began to realize what was going on.

"I was so completely, totally stunned," Schlaufman laughed. "I had no idea. I was speechless."

Baragrey said Schlaufman earned it. "I'm thankful to be able to work with her...and to have that coordinated effort between the agencies of Otsego County. We work together as a team and provide Otsego County with the best possible services."

Schlaufman expressed her thanks and appreciation to those who made the decision regarding the award, but also gave credit to those she worked with on this case.

"This was a combined effort of many. We kept the children safe, kept the children with their mother and ultimately led to the prosecution of the perpetrator," she said.

"That's how things get done and get done well – through all the community resources. I think this county works well together."

Schlaufman's name will be placed on a plaque in the 46<sup>th</sup> Circuit Court room among the past three recipients of the Crime Victim's Service Award "to remind people in the courtroom it's not just the prosecutor and the attorneys in there, the victims are there as well."

## \$4.7 million in grants to serve at-risk children

LANSGING—Twenty-two new prevention grants will help communities provide services to families whose children have identified needs or risk factors. Family Independence Agency director Douglas E. Howard made this announcement March 10.

Total grant funding is more than \$4.7 million. These funds will be used for programs taking place between April 2000 and September 2001. The new programs serve families whose children are age zero (birth) through three.

“This initiative will help

prevent child abuse and neglect, promote prevention and strong, nurturing families,” said Howard.

The grants are a part of a comprehensive service coordination initiative with special emphasis on prevention. Partners in the initiative are Michigan departments of Community Health and Education, Family Independence Agency, the Children’s Trust Fund and local multi-purpose collaborative bodies.

“Community collaboration is critical to the success of this initiative,” said Howard.

Programs selected for funding will help foster positive parenting skills, increase school readiness, promote access to community services and increase local capacity to serve at-risk families. Some programs will support healthy family environments that discourage alcohol, tobacco and substance abuse.

The grants are part of a \$5.3 million pooled appropriation from Community Health, Education and the Family Independence Agency designated for community-based

### **BHK Child Development Board**

Counties served: Houghton-Keweenaw-Ontonagon

Contact: Rod Liimatainen (906) 482-3663

Services will include in-home infant mental health services, increased access to Public Health infant supports, extension of home visitor services to Ontonagon County, respite care, emergency & sick-child care and coordination of services by a 0-3 advisory council.

### **Berrien County Health Department**

County served: Berrien

Contact: John Nelson (616) 927-5603

The Prenatal and Early Childhood Nurse Home Visitation program will provide parenting education and assessment through home visits to low-income, first-time mothers and their families.

### **Calhoun Intermediate School District**

County served: Calhoun

Contact: Cindy Doty (616) 781-5141

The Early On program will provide home visiting services to at-risk families currently enrolled. Information and referral services, service coordination and parenting education will also be provided.

### **Catholic Social Services of Washtenaw County**

County served: Washtenaw

Contact: Lois Plantefaber (734) 971-9781, ext. 324

The Healthy Beginnings program will provide in-home services to at-risk families. It will work with agencies in the community to coordinate services, referrals, and to eliminate duplication of services.

### **Child Abuse and Neglect Council of Saginaw County**

County served: Saginaw

Contact: Suzanne Greenberg (517) 752-7226

The Birth through Three Education Program will hire four support workers who will work intensively with 60 families considered at high-risk. Weekly home visits, playgroups, and parent support groups will be provided.

### **Child and Family Resource Council**

County served: Kent

Contact: Candace Cowling (616) 454-4673

The Healthy Start program will serve at-risk families through an urban county hospital. Weekly home visits, assessment, information and referral services will be provided.

### **District Health Department #2**

Counties served: Alcona, Iosco, & Oscoda

Contact: Laura Chapman (517) 345-5020

The Family Matters program will provide in-home services to at-risk families in the tri-county area who are not eligible for other support services. Services will also include parenting classes, monthly newsletters, information and referral.

### **District Health Department #4**

County served: Alpena

Contact: Rosanne Schultz (517) 354-4230

The Day One program will hire two additional family support workers to serve all families identified as being at risk for child abuse and neglect. The program is modeled after the Healthy Families program and provides home visiting services, a parent support group, information and referral.

### **District Health Department #4**

County served: Cheboygan

Contact: Rosanne Schultz (517) 354-4230

The Day One program will hire one family support worker and one parent educator to serve at-risk families in Cheboygan County. The program is modeled after the Healthy Families program and provides home visiting services, a parent support group, information and referral.

prevention programs.

“These communities were selected for funding based on readiness to deliver services and on community need,” said Department of Community Health director James Haveman.

Haveman said criteria for selection included communities having higher than statewide average rates of infant mortality, poverty, out-of-wedlock pregnancy, child abuse and neglect, teen pregnancy and adult substance abuse.

“These grants are more

problem-focused and are targeted to families who need a little more support” said Candace Sorenson, chairperson of the Children’s Trust Fund board. “Our goal is to assist families before they enter the system when we can best maximize the impact.”

Grants are provided from allocations totaling \$1,687,333 for the current fiscal year and \$3,013,474 for fiscal year 2001. Allocations are contingent on legislative appropriation and the availability of revenue for the fiscal years.

“I am pleased to support development of this prevention initiative,” said Arthur E. Ellis, Superintendent of Public Instruction. “These children must be afforded the opportunity for an equal start through a seamless system of services that assures each has an opportunity to reach his or her full potential and assure success in school.”

A review of grantees, grant amounts, contact people and intended uses follow.

#### **Florence Crittenton Services**

County served: Jackson

Contact: Robert Powell (517) 787-3500

The Parents of Promise program will provide parent education and playgroups using the Parents As Teachers curriculum. Home visiting services by will be provided five community agencies.

#### **Lapeer Community Schools**

County served: Lapeer

Contact: Cynthia McCann (810) 667-2453

A family support center will be created targeted at teen parents and other at-risk families. Services will include developmental, licensed day care, weekly parenting classes, onsite public health nursing services, counseling services, support groups, mentoring and transportation.

#### **Lenawee Intermediate School District**

County served: Lenawee

Contact: Gene Niedzwiecki (517) 265-1612

Three services will be expanded to serve more families to include a breastfeeding peer counselor, parenting education to teen parents and home visiting services. A community intake referral form will be created.

#### **Monroe County Intermediate School District**

County served: Monroe

Contact: Douglas Redding (734) 242-5799, ext. 1912

The Healthy Start program will be expanded to serve at-risk pregnant teens and teen parents in Monroe County, including provision of prenatal services and pre and postnatal classes.

#### **MSU Extension**

County served: Bay

Contact: Darci Currier (517) 895-4026

Expanded services will be provided for at-risk families in Bay County including home visiting, hospital screenings, a central intake and referral system that includes a toll-free number, educational and developmental mailings for enrolled families.

#### **MSU Extension - Eaton County**

County served: Eaton

Contact: Leonard Peters (517) 543-7500, ext. 203

A parenting instructor will be added to provide in-home services based on the Building Strong Families program. A monthly parent support group will also be provided for parents.

#### **MSU Extension – Grand Traverse County**

County served: Grand Traverse

Contact: Jennifer Berkey (231) 922-4620

The Healthy Futures program will hire one public health nurse to provide service coordination and home visits to at-risk families. Training on the Parents as Teachers curriculum will also be available to county service providers.

#### **Northeast Michigan Community Mental Health Services Board**

County served: Presque Isle

Contact: Joseph Manary (517) 356-2161

The Infant Mental Health program will hire a full-time infant mental health specialist. Specialized in-home services will be provided to eligible families that have at least three risk factors.

#### **Newaygo Public Schools**

County served: Newaygo

Contact: Denise Gasper (231) 652-3835

The Parents as Teachers curriculum will be integrated with direct services in the county by training 16 current staff. Home visits, a packet of health information, parenting groups, and parenting education opportunities will also be provided to at-risk families.

#### **Shiawassee County Health Department**

County served: Shiawassee

Contact: Rose Mary Asman (517) 743-2355

The Healthy Families program will provide home visiting services to at-risk families in Shiawassee County. A multi-disciplinary team will provide case management and linkages to other needed services.



# 76<sup>th</sup> achiever honored in Detroit

**Former assistance recipient and teen parent now dedicated to achieving self-sufficiency**

By Roshelle Mason, Section Manager

Wayne County Family Independence Agency Fullerton-Jeffries District

Telephone (313) 934-7202



**Dionne Cole**

DETROIT—Dionne Cole was awarded the 76<sup>th</sup> Achiever of the Month award March 24 in a ceremony at the Wayne County FIA Fullerton-Jeffries District. Cole is a former FIP recipient and teen parent committed to becoming self-sufficient.

FIA director Douglas E. Howard joined the Fullerton-Jeffries staff for lunch during the ceremony, prepared and served by Chef Paul and students from the Western Wayne Community Juvenile Justice Center. In his remarks, Howard said the award was established in October 1993 to recognize the contributions and achievements of participants in Michigan's landmark reform initiative, *To Strengthen Michigan Families*.

"Dionne Cole is being honored for her determined and intense pursuit of independence from the welfare system," said Howard. "I

am very proud of this program because achievers are what our agency is all about – people overcoming barriers or personal problems to achieve for themselves and their families.

"The best news about the success of *To Strengthen Michigan Families* is the fact that more of our customers are working," said Howard. Fullerton-Jeffries District manager Josh Mack also congratulated Dionne Cole for her extraordinary achievements.

Dionne Cole lost her mother while very young and was reared by her grandmother. When she became pregnant and had to go on public assistance, her case was handled by the Wayne County FIA's teen parent unit. Although Cole had a newborn baby she was able to finish high school. When she exceeded the teen parent program's age limit, her case was transferred to Fullerton-Jeffries District.

When she met with family independence specialist Hattie Tindle—who nominated her for the achiever award—Dionne learned of the requirement to participate in the Work First Program. Cole was unemployed but determined to become independent. She began a self-initiated job

search, and became employed with the Strategic Protection Group as a security guard. The FIA provided Cole with funds to purchase a vehicle, which removed the transportation barrier. Within three months of becoming employed, Cole's FIP case had closed. FIA continues to provide medical assistance, food stamps and child care payments.

"Dionne is much more to me than simply a customer," said Tindle. "When we had our first office appointment, I was struck by how responsible she was. I could see the love she had for her son, and I was impressed by her parenting skills,

*continues next page*

**Below: The achiever with her three-year-old son, Ricky Hudgen.**



## ***To Strengthen Michigan Families***

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## ***Achiever of the Month***



# Welfare caseload resumes downward trend

## Caseload declines to level of April 1970

The Family Independence Program average caseload resumed its downward trend in March, continuing to reach levels not seen since April 1970. The FIP caseload has declined by 67 percent since March 1994, when it totaled 226,863 cases—the highest number in recent years.

In March the average daily caseload was 73,824 with 38,000 being child only or deferred cases—meaning only about 36,000 cases represented work-ready adults.

In March, 76 percent of all “target” FIP cases in Michigan — those expected to work and earn income — were in Project Zero counties. Project Zero counties decreased target cases 4.5 percent from February to March, improving the statewide rate of 3.4 percent.

Declining welfare cases are in part a result of support services available to FIP recipients and low-income families. They include child care, food stamps, Work First job placement and assistance services and medical assistance. The FIA provides child care, food stamp and some medical assistance. Michigan Department of Community Health provides Medicaid.

In March 67,193 families qualified for day care assistance from FIA, representing 125,459 children. During March, 50,587 food stamp households were working and received cash instead of food stamps.

To be eligible for “cash out” a food stamp recipient must work and earn at least \$350 monthly for three successive months. Families receiving the benefit get a check instead of food stamp coupons.

“Food stamp cash out was allowed by waiver from the federal government in 1996 as an incentive for people to work,” said FIA director Douglas E. Howard. “It will eventually be ended and superseded by the Electronic Benefits Transfer (EBT) program when it goes online statewide.”

EBT is a program where cash assistance and food stamp customers will access benefits via a debit card. The program will be tested in Jackson County early this summer and expanded statewide after a successful trial.

## Former teen mom dedicated to self-sufficiency

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since she’s a young person.”

Tindle learned on her first home visit that Cole was an excellent housekeeper. She continues to encourage Cole, who plans to return to school in the near future. “She is a self-starter,” Tindle said.

During the event, Mack welcomed the honoree and guests including Cole’s three-year-old son, Ricky Hudgens, and her grandmother, Thelma Cole. Others in attendance were Wayne County FIA chief deputy director Clarence Willis Jr.; acting Zone IX manager Reada Johnson; Zone VII manager Wanda Bailey; Wayne County Social Services Board member, Eloise Culmer-Whitten; and members of the Fullerton-Jeffries Customer Community

Advisory Board and Work First partners.

The achiever received certificates of recognition from state Rep. Kwame Kilpatrick of Detroit and U. S. Rep. Carolyn Kilpatrick of Detroit. Mack presented a gift certificate on behalf of the Fullerton-Jeffries District and the Customer Community Advisory Board.



**Dionne and grandmother Thelma Cole.**

Dionne was very happy to receive the award. She thanked Howard and the FIA for the assistance she received. “I have never had a worker like Ms. Tindle,” she said. “I thank my grandmother, I love her so much, and I don’t know where I would be without her,” an emotional Cole said.

Cole said she had no prepared speech and could only say what was in her heart.

“I do not like receiving checks in the mail and I want to be my own boss,” she said. Cole hopes to own her own beauty shop someday. The Fullerton-Jeffries staff is proud of Dionne Cole and we are confident she will continue to succeed in her endeavors.

## Did you know?

# Ensure the meeting serves its purpose

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Regular meetings are an essential function of your team, but organizing a meeting for the sake of obligation is not always appropriate. Scheduling a meeting requires a true purpose behind it and effective facilitation throughout. Here are some recommended steps to follow:

- Decide if a meeting is necessary. Consider whether information can be shared or a process can be implemented without a scheduled meeting. Does the issue require the whole team's involvement?
- If you need to hold a meeting, make preparations. Establish a meeting objective, notify the team of the date, time and location, create a prioritized agenda, copy relevant information prior to the meeting and distribute an agenda to the team in advance.
- To begin the meeting, start on time, review the purpose and ground rules, assign specific meeting roles and build enthusiasm.
- As the meeting takes place, note follow-up items, verbalize points clearly and concisely, and ask if everyone understands each issue. Bring points to closure before moving on. Be sure to stick to the time frame unless the team has not reached consensus, and monitor the meetings pace.
- Bring the meeting to a close. Summarize action plans, assignments and deadlines, review decisions and agenda items for the next meeting, including unfinished business, thank members for participation and contributions and schedule the next convenient meeting.

**Source:** The Ken Blanchard Companies, Escondido, Calif., (800) 728-6000.

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